the Council of Ministers is likely to be held in Colombo in the first quarter of 2003.

(b) to (e) Do not arise.

Construction of Chancery-cum-Embassy Residences

514. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has not finalized the proposal for construction of Chancery-cum-Embassy residences etc. at Beijing, Doha, Muscat and Gaborone on the plots acquired for the purpose.

(b) whether an avoidable expenditure of Rs. 26.27 crore on hiring of accommodation has been incurred till 1999-2000;

(c) if so, the reasons for delay in the decision; and

(d) the steps being taken to expedite the decision?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a), (c) and (d) Yes Sir, the Chancery-cum-Embassy residence projects at Beijing, Doha, Muscat and Gaborone, on the plots of land acquired by the Government, are at advanced stages of processing. Financial approvals have been obtained for undertaking the construction work in Doha and Gaborone. The process of finalisation of conceptual layout plans for the Chancery project in Beijing and Embassy complex project in Muscat is nearing completion.

The construction projects are undertaken in a phased manner keeping in view the economic viability and the comparative rental structure and accordingly a number of projects had been undertaken in other countries based on these criteria. The projects in Beijing, Doha, Gaborone and Muscat have now been identified for early implementation and are at final stages of processing as mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

(b) Yes, Sir, the total payment on rental in Beijing, Doha, Muscat and Gaborone between 1992-93 and 1999-2000 was Rs. 26.27 crores. It may also be mentioned that the combined annual rental liability in these countries is Rs. 4.64 crores, as against the total annual rental liability of Rs. 142.16 crores. The construction cost has been estimated at Rs. 93 crores.